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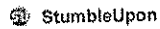
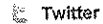
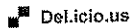
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Second executive pleads guilty in Pemex theft case

By GUILLERMO CONTRERAS San Antonio Express-News
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The president of an Edinburg company pleaded guilty Friday in federal court in Houston to charges relating to theft of petroleum products from Mexican oil giant Petróleos Mexicanos.

Arnoldo Maldonado of Y Oil and Gas was released on unsecured bond pending sentencing. He pleaded guilty to conspiracy to receive stolen petroleum condensate, court records show.

Mexican and U.S. authorities allege a wide-ranging scheme to import and resell condensate stolen from Pemex.

In April, Mexican security forces arrested a group that allegedly made \$46 million in the past two years smuggling condensates stolen by illegally tapping Pemex pipelines. The organization is linked to the Gulf Cartel and its enforcement wing, Los Zetas, officials said.

Court documents said Maldonado helped others, between January and March, arrange for at least 22 tanker trucks to transport condensate from Mexico into the U.S., knowing it was stolen.

Neither Maldonado nor his lawyer, Fela Olivarez, returned calls seeking comment.

Federal prosecutors have so far brought charges only against Maldonado and Donald Schroeder, former president of Trammo Petroleum in Houston.

In May, Schroeder pleaded guilty to knowingly buying and reselling stolen condensate. Schroeder agreed to pay a \$2 million fine, and in August, American officials handed over a \$2.4 million check from Trammo to Mexican authorities as repayment for stolen condensate.

Schroeder and Maldonado are cooperating with prosecutors, records show.

Prosecutors have subpoenaed shipment records of companies that bought condensate, including Murphy Energy of Oklahoma and Germany-based BASF. Representatives of both companies said the companies did not know the condensate was stolen and that they are cooperating with authorities.

"We paid market value for a product that someone now says was stolen," said Joel Androphy, a lawyer for Murphy Energy.

"We just didn't have any knowledge of that."

Daniel Pepitone, spokesman for BASF's U.S. operations, confirmed that BASF has done business with Trammo and that the company is cooperating with investigators.

"We have no reason to believe BASF had any involvement in the alleged wrong-doing," he said.